

Bus captain script

THURSDAY August 16, 2018

NORTH SIDE LOOP

LINCOLN PARK ZOO NATURE BOARDWALK

Our next site is in Lincoln Park, one of Chicago's earliest and most heavily used parks. In the 1830s it was a cemetery where victims of cholera and smallpox were buried outside the city limits. Starting in the 1860s, the area was converted into a lakefront park. Throughout Lincoln Park's history, renowned artists, landscape designers, and architects contributed to its development. These included sculptor Augustus-Saint Gaudens, landscape designers Ossian Cole Simonds and Alfred Caldwell, and architects Joseph Lyman Silsbee and Dwight H. Perkins.

Lincoln Park Zoo was founded in 1868 with a gift of two pairs of mute swans from Central Park in New York. The 35-acre zoo is open free to the public every day. It has more than 1,000 animals of 200 species and a bur oak that may be 300 years old. The zoo now has extensive science and conservation programs focused on preserving threatened species, restoring habitat, and supporting urban wildlife.

Today's visit will center on the Nature Boardwalk, which opened in 2010. The first zoo exhibit to focus on plants and their relationship to animals, it features a 2/3 mile path circling a manmade pond that was deepened to create aquatic wildlife habitat. The plantings include more than 250 prairie and wetland species. They were planted from plugs and seed.

The boardwalk and its plants support a wide range of pollinators, migratory and resident birds, turtles, and other wildlife. Rare black-crowned night herons have been spotted nesting in nearby trees. The boardwalk is used as a science and nature classroom as well as a retreat in one of the city's most dense neighborhoods.

The zoo's master plan calls for increasing development of its gardens and planted areas. The effort is being led by Joseph Rothleutner, director of horticulture.

For more information about the Lincoln Park zoo, contact Jillian Braun, PR director, 312-742-5791, jbrown@lpzoo.org.

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LINCOLN PARK CONSERVATORY AND NEARBY GARDENS

The Lincoln Park Conservatory is just north of the Lincoln Park Zoo, but in order to keep the group together, we'll ride the bus.

Our next stop is one of the many conservatories that were built through the United States and Europe in the 19th century as new technologies were developed for building with iron and glass.

The Lincoln Park Conservatory is smaller and older than the Garfield Park Conservatory, which you may have seen yesterday. This conservatory was built in phases between 1890 and 1895. Nationally renowned architect Joseph Lyman Silsbee designed it in collaboration with architect M.E. Bell.

Today, it is used both to showcase exotic plants and to grow the thousands of plants needed for use in the parks. It has four display houses: the Palm House, the Fern Room, the Orchid House and the Show House, which is home to the annual seasonal flower shows. Admission is free every day. An active citizens group, the Lincoln Park Conservatory, is working to restore the building.

This stop also includes two other sights. In front of the conservatory, a huge expanse of formal garden sweeps away to the south, with the downtown skyline rising above it. Originally planted in high Victorian style with colorful annuals and tropicals, the garden now includes a wider variety of plants, but maintains its formal lines.

Across Stockton Drive from the conservatory is Grandma's Garden, an extensive perennial planting. Please be careful crossing Stockton Drive, and don't miss the bus.

For more information on the Garfield Park Conservatory, contact Chicago Park District PR officer Michele Lemons, 312-742-4790, michele.lemons@chicagoparkdistrict.com.

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WICKER PARK PRIVATE GARDENS

The Wicker Park Historic District is a charming neighborhood of historic 19th Century homes with a variety of front- and side-yard gardens in the Wicker Park Historic District. On this tour stop, you'll walk a total of about four blocks to see a park and four private gardens. You will be accompanied by Doug Wood, president of the Wicker Park Garden Club, and knowledgeable local resident volunteers.

The tour will start at a lush block-long perennial border planted and maintained by a passionate local garden club. Then you'll have to cross busy Damen Avenue to reach the private gardens, so please be careful.

Most of the gardens are front yards and can be enjoyed from the sidewalk. We're only planning to enter one garden.

In keeping with a neighborhood that prizes the funky as well as the formal, the gardens' styles range from elegant parterres to a lawn sometimes grazed by whimsical faux sheep.

Wicker Park's architecture dates from the 1870s through the 1890s, when it was home to prosperous German and Scandinavian immigrants. Since then, the neighborhood has been home to a number of ethnic groups and it had some ragged decades. In the 1990s, Wicker Park was colonized by artists, and it has

since become an affluent, colorful neighborhood known for its restaurants, clubs and art galleries.

The Wicker Park Garden Club, which planted and maintains the block-long perennial border in the tiny triangular Wicker Park, has been among the organizations leading the neighborhood's revival.

For more information on Wicker Park, contact Doug Wood, Doug.Wood@WickerPark.org, or see wickerpark.org.